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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1505

December 16, 2005

Dr. Andrew C. von Eschenbach
Acting Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
5600 Fishers Lane, Room 15-47
Rockville, Maryland 20857

Dear Dr. von Eschenbach,

I am writing to share with you concerns that have been brought to my attention regarding Docket # 2002N-0273, proposed changes to the existing ruminant feed ban rule.

As you know, we have tested over 500,000 cattle for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in this country in recent years, with only one native-born case testing conclusively positive and this cow could have very well been infected before our current ban was put in place in 1997. Since contaminated feedstuffs have been considered the most likely cause of transmission of BSE, the fact that we have had no documented cases of transmission after imposing the existing ban verifies that the existing rule is effective.

In regard to the proposed rule, I am told by renderers in my district that the feasibility of requiring all specified risk materials (SRM's) be removed from all dead stock obtained from farms before being rendered into a protein source is not likely. Specifically, their concern is that it is impossible to remove the spinal cord from partially decayed cattle in the summer or frozen cattle in the winter. The livestock and rendering industries are also concerned that value could be removed from dead stock, resulting in less livestock producers choosing to utilize the renderers. This would be an unfortunate result, considering the options of composting or burying them and possible disease issues. In addition, the viable options for disposing of SRM's are limited and would cause serious problems for local landfills. Finally, the removal of ruminant proteins from our non-ruminant feed supplies is likely to raise the cost of other protein sources, thereby increasing the feed cost to those producers.

I understand that the FDA wants regulate the best it can in order to ensure a safe animal population and food supply. As you move forward, I encourage you to consider these concerns to craft a rule that is feasible and will not harm the livestock or rendering industries.

Sincerely,



Steve King
Member of Congress

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